

# The Rescue Discourse: Representations of Saudi Women in the Western Media

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## Abstract

It is important to observe that the media has a significant effect on how people form perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes towards issues in society. Generally, the western media views Saudi women as oppressed, unprivileged, and unable to participate and integrate with society due to Saudi culture, which the western media claims are ultra-conservative. In addition, the western media shows that Saudi women are in desperate need of western intervention to rescue them. The purpose of this paper is to examine the representation of Saudi women in four articles published pre and post the lifting of the driving ban; to investigate the processes in discourse through which such a representation is formed, and to investigate the underlying power relations and ideology that enable and motivate such a representation. Implementing Fairclough's (1995b) three-dimensional model of CDA, the researchers find that there is a positive shift in the way Saudi women are represented in the media from a submissive image to a more affluent and independent woman.

**Keywords:** Rescue discourse, pre-lifting and post-lifting the driving ban, Saudi culture, Western media

## 1. Introduction

Saudi women have for a long time found themselves at the centre of the struggle. A struggle between culture, religion, academicians, and the media, who, instead of empowering them, have always viewed them in a stereotypical way. The western media is not an exception in this case. It is not hard to notice that women in Saudi Arabia, as well as in a few other countries, are not well represented in many fields, including the media. Research proves that Saudi women are negatively represented in the western media as oppressed, unprivileged, and unable to participate in and integrate with society due to Saudi culture, which the western media claims is ultra-conservative. This is no doubt a bitter pill that the Saudi woman has had to swallow.

The motivation behind this research is first because of the attention the western media gives to Saudi women and all the stories related to them. Second, it is because the researchers believe that the image that has been portrayed by the media is not a true depiction of the situation. Hall (1997) believes that it is the role of researchers to reduce the gap that exists between the real image and the image that is portrayed by the media (15). He believes that there is an inevitable link between power and the media. Media representations determine power, and the latter is created by building standards, concepts, and principles that form power relationships.

Research in this field raises public awareness of the importance of accurate representations of women, which the media plays a significant role in constructing and deconstructing. An accurate portrayal of women consequently has a great effect on the process of women's empowerment. It is important to know that women are not the only beneficiaries of this empowerment. This process benefits the entire society and increases economic growth, political stability, and social transformation.

### 1.1 Aim

The study aims to analyze the representation of Saudi women in the western media after obtaining new rights. The research paper also aims to investigate the processes in discourse through which the representation of Saudi women is formed and to examine the underlying power relations and ideology that enable and motivate such a representation.

### 1.2 Research Questions

It is necessary to consider the multiplicity of levels involved in discourse when attempting to analyze such representations. Several overarching research questions address this multiplicity, each focusing on a particular level:

- i. Are there any changes in how Saudi women are portrayed in the western media after the Saudi reforms? If yes, how is this change reflected in the data?
- ii. How is sociocultural power expressed linguistically in the articles?
- iii. Is the rescue discourse still apparent in the data?

## 2. Literature Review

The current study is discussed in this part through a review of some relevant literature. This research needs to be reviewed in five key areas to get a thorough understanding; representation, media discourse, orientalism, critical discourse analysis, and previous research on the representation of Saudi women in the western media.

### 2.1 Representation

The most prominent definition of representation in cultural studies is proposed by Hall (1997), who argues that “representation connects meaning and language to culture” (15). However, there is more to the definition of representation that gives it its weight in cultural studies. Representation plays a key role in the production and exchange of meaning in a culture. It also refers to the way that words and images convey meaning to the things they depict.

Hall has conducted a research in 1970 about the representation of race in British TV. He claims that black people have been treated as inferior because Britain has created a racist panic directed towards black citizens. Therefore, Hall argues that the mass media try to show pluralism and acceptance. However, they are unable to do so. As a result, he believes that there is a lack of equal opportunity and respect for diversity.

There are many theories that describe how language is used to represent the world, such as the reflective, the intentional, and the constructionist approach. The reflective approach indicates that language is used as a mirror, reflecting the true meaning of an object, person, idea, or event as it exists in the world. In addition, it suggests that language works by simply reflecting or imitating a fixed “truth” that is already present in the real world (Hall, 1997, 24).

The second is the intentional approach, which shows that writers, authors, or speakers usually impose meaning in their discourse by using language. This approach contradicts the first one in that words mean only what their author intends them to mean. It proposes that communication depends on shared linguistic conventions and shared cultural codes, which must be followed by the author to produce a shared and understood discourse (Hall, 1997, 25).

The third approach is the constructionist approach, and it is concerned with the social aspect of a language. It proposes that things and language users cannot fix meaning and that meaning is constructed through the use of representational systems (Hall, 1997, 25).

Hall (1997) further comments that:

*Constructivists do not deny the existence of the material world. However, it is not the material world that conveys meaning: it is the language system or whatever system we are using to represent our concepts. It is social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to communicate that world meaningfully to others (25).*

Furthermore, there are two sub-types that diverge from the constructionist approach: the semiotic approach which is proposed by de Saussure (1960), and the discursive approach that is influenced by Foucault (1980).

### 2.2 Media Discourse

The media is not just a mirror that reflects society and its events; the influence of the media has expanded to affect how people think and perceive cultural issues (Obeidat, 2002). In addition, there is an inevitable link between power and the media. Media representations determine power, and the latter is created by building standards, concepts, and principles that form power relationships (Orgad, 2012). Hjarvard (2008) asserts that the concept of medicalization is crucial to understanding the importance of the media to culture and society. The concept of medicalization refers to the media's influence on society and culture. There is a double-sided process of high modernity where the media emerge as independent institutions with their own logic that other social institutions must adapt to. Similarly, the media plays an important role in other institutions, such as politics, work, family, and religion (Hjarvard, 2008). Therefore, media discourse becomes the focus of many linguists, such as van Dijk (1995 and 1998), Fairclough (1995a), and Fowler (1991). Foreign news products are mainly selected based on the interests of political, military, and business elites, according to van Dijk (1995). Most foreign news focuses on political, military, and economic events rather than social and cultural ones (248). Bell (1991) believes that media discourse could be examined in order to uncover the processes in which the media masks its ideological positions, opinions, and agendas. Furthermore, van Dijk (1988) asserts that the media are not neutral, common-sense, or rational mediators of social events, but rather help reproduce pre-formulated ideologies. As van Dijk (1997) points out, the focus of discourse analysis should be “on the social actions accomplished by language users communicating within social and cultural contexts” (13). Consequently, media discourse conveys not only information and facts, but also implicit ideologies and opinions. As a result, media discourse is not to be considered as a mere representation of reality, and what people perceive from the media as factual information is only a version of the truth.

Fairclough (1989, 1992, and 1995a) constructs his own methodology to study media discourse. Language, discourse, and power in society are the main concerns of his approach, which is inspired by Halliday's (1985) functional framework. He draws on ideas from Foucault's (1980) ideas about social theories. Syntactic variations, he believes, can conceal ideologies by describing events and actions.

### 2.3 Orientalism

The discussion of representation cannot be completed without mentioning Said's work on Orientalism (1978), which has changed the views and attitude of the west towards the Orient. An Orientalist is defined by Said (1978) as “a Western way of dominating, restructuring, and

having authority over the Orient" (3). The Orient is a term invented by Said to refer to the so-called third-world and the underdeveloped countries. As a result, the Orient is presented from the viewpoint of "superior Europeanism" (7). Marx (1852) has written in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, "they cannot represent themselves; they must be represented" (Cited in Said, 1978, 2). Said uses this quotation to refer to the representational relationship between the West and the Orient. In this representational relationship, the West "orientalizes" and stereotypes the Orient (Haapasaari, Kulmala, & Kuikka, 2012).

One of the aspects of misrepresentation of the "other" is stereotyping. Stereotypes are widely held, but fixed and oversimplified images or ideas of a particular type of person or thing. Stereotyping reduces a group of people to oversimplified clichés (Hall, 1997). The media's use of stereotypes results from the fact that people still practice stereotyping, but to different degrees (Newbold et al., 2002).

According to Ridouani (2011), Saudi women are misrepresented in the western media as the media seeks to distort the identity and concepts of the Islamic religion. The media is biased in that it fails to look into the expertise and professional ability of Saudi women (Ridouani, 2011). Instead, it only focuses on issues such as the calamities facing Saudi women, the oppression that women undergo, etc., thus framing them as a minority group of people. In addition, the western media aims at scapegoating different ideologies, for instance, blaming terrorism on the culture of the Saudis (Obeidat, 2002).

#### 2.4 Critical Discourse Analysis

In CDA, power is exercised through language. In this study, language is viewed as a form of social practice by an interdisciplinary approach. Social practices are tied to specific historical contexts and serve to reproduce existing social relations and satisfy different interests. The analysis in this study follows CDA as a primary theoretical framework, mainly because of its strong connection to cultural studies and the depth it will add to the analysis.

The beginning of this field is marked with the publication of Fowler, Hodge, Kress, and Trew's book (1979), which concentrates on the perfection of the theory and methodology of critical linguistics. They have focused on developing a complete analytical system that is easily learnt.

Wodak and Meyer (2001) define CDA as "the field concerned with analyzing transparent structural relationships of dominance. One of the aims of CDA is to inspect the social inequality that is expressed and conveyed through the use of language" (2). What distinguishes CDA from DA is the type of questions that it asks and the role that a critical discourse analyst plays in the process of the analysis. According to Wodak and Meyer (2001), being critical in this sense requires the analyst to be distant from the text, to identify his political stance, and to write a reflection based on that stance. Therefore, a writer should seek to uncover the interconnections between certain aspects of discourse (Fairclough, 1985).

Fairclough (1993) defines CDA as:

discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes; to investigate how such practices, events, and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony (135).

CDA takes the perspective of those who do not have power in order to analyze the language of those who do have power (Fairclough, 1985). The criticism should be directed at them because they are responsible for the inequalities and they have the ability to make a change (Haapasaari, Kulmala, & Kuikka, 2012). Furthermore, CDA is not a field in which objectivity is anticipated. Rather, it is the field that initiates movements, advocates for groups facing discrimination, and interferes in social practices (Fairclough, Mulderrig, & Wodak, 2011).

There are many theories and methods of analysis in the field of CDA. One of them is proposed by Gee (2011), which draws the distinction between critical and non-critical discourse analysis, where in the latter the analysis describes the language with the goal of understanding it. However, the former, as explained earlier, goes beyond the surface level meaning and inspect for the injustices and discriminations in the discourse which trigger criticism. From Gee's perspective, any piece of discourse builds one or more of seven things or seven areas of "reality," which he calls "seven building tasks" of language (2011). Each one of these tasks asks a different question. Therefore, an analyst should aspire to find the answers to these questions from the text in order to analyze it.

The first building task is Significance, which asks "which parts are of value in the discourse and which are deliberately left aside?" The second task is Activities, which asks "What activity or activities are being enacted with this piece of language?" The third task is Identities, concerned with "What identity or identities is this piece of language being used to enact?" The fourth task is Relations, which entails determining "What kind of relationship or relationships is this piece of language seeking to enact with others (present or absent)?" The fifth is Politics, which explores "What perspective on social goods does this piece of language convey?" The sixth is Connections, investigating "How does this piece of language connect or disconnect things?" The final task is Sign Systems and Knowledge, which focuses on "How does this piece of language privilege or deprive specific sign systems or different ways of knowing and believing?" (Gee, 2011, 13).

Another important theory in this field is the three-dimensional model of CDA, which is widely used in cultural-related studies. This approach is created by Fairclough (1995b) and a number of critical social theorists have been drawn upon, such as Foucault (1980). Fairclough (1995b) has developed a CDA model based on the assumption that language is a communicative event. There are three dimensions to the model:

1. The object of analysis (including verbal, visual or verbal and visual texts).
2. The processes by which the object is created and received by human subjects (writing, speaking, designing, reading, listening, and viewing).
3. The socio-historical conditions that govern these processes.

According to Fairclough (1995b), each of these dimensions requires a different kind of analysis:

#### 1. Text Analysis (Description);

The first dimension of this framework is text. The process of text analysis involves linguistic analysis of lexical choices, grammar, semantics, sound system, and the cohesion-organization at the sentence level. He believes that any text is analysable in terms of three functions. First, *representations* of social practice, the construction of *relationships* between writer and reader, and the construction of writer-reader *identities*.

#### 2. Discourse Practice (Interpretation);

This dimension is of two sides:

##### A. Discourse Processes:

A core concept in the discussion of discourse processes is the intertextuality of text. According to Fairclough (1995b), the intertextual analysis focuses on the borderline between text and discourse practice in the analytical framework. The intertextual analysis involves looking at text from the perspective of discourse practice, looking at the traces of discourse practice in the text (16). According to Fairclough (1992), unlike linguistic analysis, which is descriptive in nature, the intertextuality of text requires an interpretive analysis.

##### B. Institutional Process:

This process is closely related to media discourse, which is discussed above, and in particular to the production and consumption of media. Production involves the institutional routines of news gathering, news selection, writing, and editing (Fairclough, 1995b; Fowler, 1991; van Dijk, 1993). Consumption refers mainly to the ways readers read and comprehend text.

#### 3. Sociocultural Practice (Explanation):

This level of analysis pertains to three aspects of sociocultural context' communicative events: economic, political, and cultural. The economics of the media is very crucial in the study of the media because, according to Fairclough (1995b), "the economics of an institution is an important determinant of its practices and its texts" (40). The media has a product to sell just like any other profitable institution. As a result, according to Fairclough (1995b), the mass media "are very much open to the effects of commercial pressures." This pressure plays a role in determining what is selected as news and in what ways such news is published (Fowler, 1991, 20).

The politics of the media should be considered when analysing media discourse. Many critics (Fairclough, 1995b; Fowler, 1991; Hackett, 1991; van Dijk, 1993) believe that the media works ideologically in the service of those who have the power. According to Hackett (1991), media discourses are "agents of hegemony" (56). Thus, it has been subjected to criticism from many points of view: feminism, orientalism, and antiracism.

#### 2.5 Previous Research on the Representation of Saudi Women in the Western Media

Mishra (2007) analyzes representations of Saudi women in the American press after September 11, 2001. Using feminist criticism, the critique of Orientalism, and postcolonial discourses as theoretical frameworks, the research concludes that *The Washington Post* overwhelmingly portrays Saudi women as oppressed victims in need of Western liberation, which the writer refers to as the rescue discourse that is usually found in writings about the orient.

Bashatah (2017) has done a framing analysis for articles from four British newspapers from the years 2005-2013. He concludes that the representation of Saudi women in the British news media is negative compared with the depiction of Western women in the absence of understanding of the cultural differences between societies. Furthermore, the representations of Saudi women in the newspaper sample reflect the same negative portrayal that is seen of Muslim women elsewhere in the Western media.

Between 2009 and 2012, Al-Maglouth (2017) examines women-related posts on Saudi English-language blogs. These posts discuss a variety of reformative measures implemented during that time period to allow for greater women's empowerment in Saudi Arabia. She concludes that women are largely portrayed as lacking agency and power, despite the fact that their relatively restrictive status quo is viewed negatively and change is viewed positively as a metaphorical movement and liberation. In fact, her in-depth study demonstrates that depicting the conflict between supporters of change and their opponents appears to be the primary focus, even at the expense of women and their representation in discourse.

### 3. Methodology

After examining the related literature, this part of the research is concerned with the data collection techniques that the researchers utilize in carrying out the project. It outlines the research design method that will be employed, it also highlights the methods of analysis that the researchers use. In this section, the interpretation of the collected data will be conducted. In addition, it also entails the explanation and analysis of the various articles that the researchers use during the course of the research.

3.1 Data Collection

In order to answer the questions of this study, the researchers have chosen the topic of the driving ban mainly to have a unified topic and because of the effect, it has on the image of Saudi women. Choosing the articles is a hard decision because of the overwhelming number of articles that address the same issue. The researchers decide to choose articles that are published in newspapers with the same position in the political spectrum, but from different countries in order to be able to compare and contrast between them. Furthermore, they have chosen newspapers that represent the Democratic Party, hoping that they will have more understanding of the cultural differences.

The data consist of four newspaper articles: two articles from the Daily mail which are published during pre and post-lifting the driving ban and two articles from the New York Times which are published during pre and post-lifting of the driving ban. Table 1 shows the list of the analyzed articles:

Table 1. The List of Articles

Newspaper	Pre-lifting the driving ban	Post-lifting the driving ban
The Guardian	Hillary Clinton backs Saudi Arabia women's right-to-drive campaign	It's momentous': Saudi women excited to finally hit the road"
The New York Times	MIDEAST TENSIONS; Ban on Driving by Women Reaffirmed by Saudis	"A Moment to Savour: A Saudi Woman Rejoices as Driving Ban Ends"

The Guardian is a daily newspaper that has been founded in Manchester in 1821. It is considered one of the United Kingdom’s leading newspapers, with an interesting investigative journalistic sense. The newspaper is considered a representative of the left wing. The newspaper is also known for its interest in foreign affairs (Encyclopedia Britannica, Nov 2018).

The New York Times is an American newspaper that is one of the world’s great newspapers. It has been established in 1851 and is known for its high moral tone, avoiding sensationalism and tackling the news in a very objective way. It is praised for its good coverage of international news and it is considered one of the less conservative American newspapers (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018).

3.2 Analysis Methods

The methods that are used for the analysis in this research is a combination of three theories:

1. Fairclough’s three-dimensional model (1995b).
2. The representation theory by Hall (1997).
3. Said’s Orientalism (1978).

As the researchers aim to find out the motives and ideologies underlying the analysed discourse, they will be analysing different textual features such as the sociocultural context, representation of participants, and connotations of the journalists' lexical choices at the three levels: description, interpretation, and explanation. At the first two levels, the linguistic choices will be examined following the analytical devices of Halliday’s (1985) systematic functional grammar. In the third stage, these representations will be related to Hall’s (1997) work on representation and Said’s (1978) Orientalist perspective to determine whether they confirm or deny the Western cultural hegemony.

The articles which are published pre and post-lifting the driving ban will be analysed in two separate parts, and the comparative analysis between them will be in the discussion section.

4. Critical Analysis of the Articles Published Pre-Lifting the Driving Ban

In this section, there is the detailed analysis of the articles that are published pre-lifting the driving ban. As mentioned before, the analysis is divided into three sections: description, interpretation, and explanation.

4.1 Description

4.1.1 Actors Representation

At this stage of the analysis, the researchers draw on Halliday’s (1985) systematic functional grammar. This approach focuses on texts and their contexts in order to describe language in actual use. It concerns not just structures, but also how meanings are constructed within them. The first step is to indicate the material processes, which are all the action verbs in the articles under examination. In addition, all the actors (subjects) and goals (direct objects) in all the articles have been extracted and listed. To determine the extent to which the main social actors are engaged, in this case, Saudi women, it is necessary to take this step. In addition, the different choices of actors to report the news has an ideological significance, especially in the case under examination considering that Saudi women are usually represented in the media as “lacking agency” (Al-Maghlouth, 2017, 268).

The process of extracting the actors and the material processes from the first article has resulted in the extraction of four actors: Hilary Clinton, the US State Department, the Saudi women, and the protest. The highest share of material processes is actually of Hilary Clinton and the US State Department which supports could be. The percentage of inclusion of Saudi women is only 16% in this article, which is odd since it discusses an issue where they should be the main concern.

The same process has been done for the New York Times article. The list of actors found in the article includes the Saudi government, Saudi women, foreign diplomats, Muslim religious leaders, and the ban. The results show a higher inclusion percentage 36% of Saudi women in this article than in the previous one. However, the percentage of material processes falling under the category of the Saudi government is

higher. Another issue that should be taken into consideration is the activation and passivation of the material processes used in the article. All of the inclusion cases of Saudi women in general are marked as passivation, whereas all the Saudi female activists' inclusion cases are marked as activation.

Table 2. The Actors and Material Processes from the Guardian Article

ACTOR	PROCESS
US – HILARY CLINTON	lent her support – praised - support - moved oppose – raised – said – said – said
US – STATE DEPARTMENT	said – handling - reliant - antagonise - raised
SAUDI WOMEN	doing - seeking - urged
THE PROTEST	put

Table 3. The Actors and Material Process in the New York Times Article

ACTOR	PROCESS
SAUDI GOVERNMENT MONARCHY MINISTRY OF INTERIOR SAUDI OFFICIALS	Declared - said – said – said – said – tries – said – said – used – said – prohibit – arguing – prohibit permitting
THE BAN	formalizes
SAUDI WOMEN ACTIVISTS SAUDI WOMEN IN GENERAL	Break – drive – set back – said – added not allowed – accused – fired – told – drove – sending – prohibited
FOREIGN DIPLOMAT	Said – said
MUSLIM RELIGIOUS LEADERS	Have
TRADITIONALIST	Have used

4.2 Interpretation

This section discusses the second stage of Fairclough’s (1995b) three-dimensional model, where the articles are treated not only as texts, but as discursive practice.

4.2.1 Intertextuality

An important aspect of discursive practice is intertextuality, which refers to the process of constructing a text with other texts (Fairclough, 1995b). The different ways of including other voices or texts other than those of the writers are known as reporting modes. Fairclough (1994) identifies three types of reporting modes: direct discourse DD, indirect discourse ID, and direct discourse slipping DDS. Using direct discourse means that the writer is absolutely faithful to the original statement, while using indirect discourse implies that the writer is only faithful to the content, but not the exact linguistic form. Leech and Short (1981) suggest that “the use of ID involves a commitment to give the full ideational meaning of the secondary discourse” and “DD carries a commitment to give the exact form of the words used” (Cited in Fairclough, 1995b, 56).

This indicates that reporting news is a descriptive account of what other people say, which explains the use of quotations usually found in news reports to make the news more realistic. Zhang (2013) believes that there is no completely objective and fair report of the news and the choice of a particular quotation instead of another is always on ideological bases. Thus, this section investigates only the source and number of quotations and will leave the in-depth examination of the quotations for the third stage of the analysis.

4.2.1.1 Quotations

Investigating the use of quotations used in the articles under examination is crucial to reveal the extent to which the western media is involving the Saudi women in news about them. Thus, the quotations have been grouped and categorized according to their sources. The analysis reveals that the total number of quotations that have been extracted from the Guardian’s article is six, most of which are for Hilary Clinton.

The same process of extracting and categorizing has been done for the New York Times’ article. A total of 10 quotations are found in the article. Most of the quotations are for the Saudi government, while there are only two quotations of an anonymous Saudi woman. These results are shocking since more presence of a Saudi woman's voice in these articles has been expected.

Table 4. The Source and Number of Quotations Extracted from the Two Articles

The Guardian		The New York Times	
Source	Number of quotations	Source	Number of quotations
Hilary Clinton	5	Ministry of interior	6
US State Department	1	An anonymous Saudi women	2
		A friend of the protestors	2

4.3 Explanation

This stage of analysis aims to uncover the hidden ideology and power relations that underlie the representation of Saudi women in these articles. It is at this level of analysis that the socio-cultural part of the methodological framework is implemented. Moreover, this section aims to answer the second research question, which is concerned with how sociocultural power is expressed in the articles under

examination, as well as the third question, which examines the notion of the rescue discourse that exists in the western media.

4.3.1 The Analysis of the Guardian’s Article

This article reports the pressure that the United States has placed on the kingdom of Saudi Arabia to permit Saudi women the right to drive. The article is titled “Hillary Clinton backs Saudi Arabia women’s right to drive” and the sub-title of the article is “Relations between Washington and Riyadh could be damaged by comments by US Secretary of State on female drivers.” We believe that the readers have a sense from the titles of the articles that the rescue discourse might be a prominent theme of this article. The author is suggesting that the United States is willing to sacrifice its good diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia in order to save Saudi women and to grant them their rights.

The author uses many quotations from Hilary Clinton; most of them indicate that the United States will always fight the injustices that Saudi women, as well as women from all around the world, are facing. One of the quotations that caught our attention is "We will continue in private and in public to urge all governments to address issues of discrimination and to ensure that women have an equal opportunity to fulfil their own God-given potential." This is quite a hypocritical comment coming from the secretary of state of a country that still has unequal wages. This quotation has published in 2011 during the presidency of Obama. Other presidents have been ruling the country and the issue of equal pay is yet to be resolved despite the efforts of American women. Finally, as previously mentioned, the absence of the Saudi women’s voice in this article is quite strange since the issue they are discussing is 100% Saudi.

4.3.2 The Analysis of the New York Times’ Article

This article reports the protest that some Saudi women activists organised to end the driving ban in 1990 and the formal reaction that has followed it. The article represents Saudi society as ultra conservative and addresses the harsh majors that the Saudi government bestows upon those who drive without permission. Although this article has published in 1990, way before the Guardian’s article, there are barely any notions of the rescue discourse in the article. The author does not suggest any political interventions to change the situation of women. The lack of the Saudi female voice is also an issue in the article. The quotation of the Saudi women, whom the author has kept anonymous, is less than one line in a three-page article.

5. Critical Analysis of the Articles Published Post-Lifting the Driving Ban

As the aim is to investigate the changes in the representation of Saudi women in the western media after obtaining new rights, the same three-dimensional model of CDA that has been carried out for the analysis in the previous section is repeated in this one for the articles published around the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 2019, which refers to the day Saudi women have started to drive according to the royal decree issued on the 26<sup>th</sup> of September 2018. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the discussion section will be dedicated to the comparative analysis of these two sections.

5.1 Description

5.1.1 Actors Representation

The processes of actor and material process grouping and categorization for the articles published post-lifting the driving ban are listed in tables (5) and (6). The list of actors that are found in the two articles includes Saudi Arabia, the king, Hessah Al-Ajaji (a Saudi woman), and an anonymous Saudi man. In the New York Times’ article, the percentage of inclusion for Saudi women is 81%, which is surprisingly high in comparison with the percentages of inclusion of Saudi women in the articles from pre-lifting the driving ban. Furthermore, the analysis shows that 100% of the Saudi women's inclusion cases are marked as activation.

On the other hand, the list of actors found in the Guardian’s article includes Saudi Arabia, Hamsa Al-Sonosi, Kholood Al-Ghamdi, Saudi women, Saudi women activists, and clerics. The percentages of inclusion of each Saudi women is almost 100%. The inclusion cases of all the aforementioned Saudi women are marked as activation. However, some of the inclusion cases of the Saudi women activists are marked as passivation.

Table 5. The Actors and Material Process from the New York Times’ Article

ACTOR	PROCESS
SAUDI ARABIA THE RULER	Counted down Decreed
HESSAH AL-AJAJI (SAUDI WOMAN)	Ran out- put on – jumped -drove – said -cruised- was – succeeded – lived- felt – felt – do – get – didn’t need – get – take – order – do – pull on – cover- hit – said- reversed – learned – made – was – going – went – handed – started – reached
A SAUDI MAN	Waiting – started – realized - started – giving

5.2 Interpretation

As previously explained, this section of the analysis focuses on how many quotations there are in the two articles.

5.2.1 Quotations

The quotations have been sorted and grouped. 13 different quotations in total are featured in the Guardian article, and all of them are made by Saudi women. With the exception of the Saudi women activists, whose names are kept confidential, the newspaper reports all the names

of the women they have had quoted. The New York Times article contains a total of 10 quotations, 70% of which are addressed to the Saudi woman Hessah Al-Ajaji and 30% to an unnamed Saudi man. These findings show a significant shift in the way western media outlets select their news sources.

Table 6. The Actors and Material Process from the Guardian’s Article

ACTOR	PROCESS
SAUDI ARABIA	Released
HAMSA AL-SONOSI (SAUDI WOMAN)	Drive – aspired – pleased – said – granted - is – were – said - Sitting – started – have to
KHOLOOD AL-GHAMDI (SAUDI WOMAN)	Returned – witness – said
SAUDI WOMEN	Applied – allowed – selected – said – embrace
SUADI WOMEN ACTIVISTS	Detained – remain – accused – released- prompting – said – arrested – written -
CLERICS	Expressed

Table 7. The Source and Number of Quotations Extracted from the Two Articles

The Guardian		The New York Times	
Source	Number of quotations	Source	Number of quotations
Hamsa Al-Sonousi	6	Hessah Al-Ajaji	7
Kholood Al-Ghamdi	2	A Saudi man	3
Saudi women activist (anonymous)	1		
Random Saudi women	4		

5.3 Explanation

In order to thoroughly explore the ideology underlying how Saudi women are portrayed and to determine whether any lingering ideas from the rescue discourse are present, this part will repeat the analysis approach used in Section 4.

5.3.1 The Analysis of the New York Times

The author of this piece takes us on a journey as she follows a Saudi girl as she cruises the streets of Riyadh. The phrase "A Moment to Savor" in the title is taken directly from the same girl. The fact that the Saudi woman is given a voice and is depicted as an independent woman makes us believe that this is a positive beginning to the piece. The girl's identity is revealed in the opening paragraph as Hessah Al-Ajaji, and a photo of her driving comes before it. The author's choice of writing style does not remove the Saudi ladies from the action or present them as a mysterious entity.

She put on some lipstick and stepped into the driver's seat of her parents' Lexus, which offers a new path in the portrayal of Saudi women, as the opening sentence of the second paragraph of the article. The first part challenges the traditional depiction of Saudi women as "ultra-conservative" that is frequently portrayed in the media and provides an example of a freed lady who is nonetheless living happily and pressure-free but not necessarily adhering to stringent cultural norms. The girl's parents approval is shown in the second part of the sentence, which is unusual when this connection is discussed in the Saudi household. The male relatives of Saudi women have been depicted as oppressing and mistreating them.

The following paragraph starts with "I'm a bit naughty," she said, laughing over the melody of Saudi pop, which conveys the same notion of liberation. The next paragraph gives background information about the girl. It mentions her age and educational level as "master's degree in fine arts," which represents the Saudi girl as an educated and accomplished girl.

In the following paragraphs, the writer discusses how Saudi women used to run their errands and how they have had to rely on a male relative to drive them around "as required by the kingdom's strict guardianship laws." The writer here is confused between two issues. The guardianship laws in Saudi Arabia do not require the Saudi girl to only go out with the father or brother and certainly does not forbid taking a bus, hiring a chauffeur, or using ride-hailing apps. Guardianship laws only apply to major life decisions like marriage. This shows that there are misconceptions about Saudi women's related issues due to a lack of knowledge.

Further, in the article, the writer quotes a Saudi man as he sees the girl driving; "We are so proud of you right now," he starts shouting, giving a thumbs up. "You have all the rights!" later on, two men say to her, "You are the pride of all of us." This shows how supportive society is of this huge step in Saudi women's rights.

Moreover, the writer repeatedly mentions that the girl has lived and got her degree in arts from America; that she has learned to drive there; and that she used to drive herself around in Los Angeles peacefully all the time of her stay there. It seems like the writer wants to give the impression that they contributed somehow to building this contemporary model of Saudi women who are successful, happy, and leading the change. These are indications that the rescue discourse might still be an issue in the writings about Saudi women.

5.3.2 The Analysis of the Guardian

This article also features a Saudi woman activist, Hamsah Al-Sonnosi, posing in front of her car ready to enjoy her long-awaited right. As previously mentioned, this article also uses a quotation from Al-Sonnosi in the title and employs many other quotations from her as well as other women, which is a writing technique we notice in most of the articles that discuss lifting the driving ban for Saudi women. The writer in this style is acknowledging these women, giving them a voice, and talking about them in a subjective way.

In the following paragraphs, there are many quotations like “I didn’t think I’d see this day in my lifetime” and “It’s been a long time coming” employed to mark the excitement and joy the Saudi women feel about this recently obtained right.

The next paragraph discusses the reforms that the Saudi government has been going through in the last couple of years in a very positive way and describes lifting the driving ban as “the centerpiece” of the reform program. However, the paragraph ends with a very different notion. The writer describes women’s life in Saudi Arabia as “decades of repression that severely limited women’s role in society and left Saudi Arabia as the last country in the world where women were banned from driving.” We are surprised to read this sentence as we think that the writer is being cautious not to convey the image of the suppressed women in this article. Later on, the writer describes Saudi society as having “repressive social conservatism.” This is a very negative representation of society. We believe that Saudi conservatism and its symbols like the veil and abaya should be seen as signs of modesty, not repression as portrayed in the media. The writer then discusses how skeptical clerics are of this move “Women are not psychologically capable of driving, according to some clerics.” This accusation is an individual case and a personal opinion, and it is massively criticized by Saudi society. This opinion does not reflect the government clerics’ opinion. This is a faulty generalization since the government’s verified clerics have never accused women of such a disability, and they are very supportive of the royal decree.

Finally, there are some quotations used to show the support of the Saudi family; “I am still preparing myself, but my parents are supportive,” and another quotation from a Saudi man saying, “It’s time they took care of us and spoiled us.” Using this quotation indicates a contradictory meaning to the previously portrayed image of repression. It shows that Saudi women are spoiled and taken care of by their families and are not “under the mercy of their male relatives” as other articles picture them.

## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

The actor and material process as well as the intertextual analysis of the articles published pre and post-lifting driving ban show a huge difference in the way the western media is representing Saudi women and reporting news about them. The inclusion of cases of Saudi women is increased significantly in the articles published post-lifting the driving ban. In addition, most of the inclusion cases are marked as activation, in contrast with the inclusion cases from post-lifting the driving ban, which are proven to be mostly passivation. As for the intertextual analysis, the percentage of quotations of Saudi women significantly has increased after lifting the driving ban. To answer the first question of this research, these results indicate that the western media is positively including Saudi women and that they are not described as lacking agency and distanced from the picture any more.

The third level of analysis shows that there is an undeniable shift in the way Saudi women are represented in the media in a more positive direction. They are represented as educated and affluent, and they are, in most cases, supported and encouraged by their families and society. This is in comparison with articles published pre-lifting the driving ban, where there is not any light shed on the achievements and accomplishments of the Saudi women which is consistent with the findings of Altohami and Salama (2019) who conduct a critical discourse analysis study of the journalistic representations of Saudi women in The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and find out that Saudi women are negatively represented as no social roles are ascribed to them throughout the corpus.

Further, the lack of voice of Saudi women which is found in the articles published pre-lifting the driving ban seems to be a common theme in the discussion of issues related to Saudi women. Bashatah (2017) conducts a framing analysis of the Saudi women in the British media from 2005- 2013 and concludes with the same lack of voice in the articles that discuss the participation of Saudi women in the Olympics in which there is no participation of the females as a source.

Regarding the rescue discourse, it is less apparent in the sample of articles published post-lifting the driving ban which is contrary to what Kaufer and Almalki (2009) claim that the mainstream Saudi woman are depicted as in need of rescue even when discussing Saudi successful role models.

### 6.1 Comparative Analysis of the Articles Published Post-Lifting the Driving Ban

If we were to compare the two articles published after lifting the driving ban, the Guardian has dealt with this issue with a slight more prejudice in comparison to the New York Times. The Guardian’s article uses false judgments and faulty generalizations. The Guardian also positions itself as a critic of the Saudi reforms, which is a discursive practice in Western discourse about the Orient. Furthermore, in the New York Times article, there is a misconception about the issue of guardianship laws that we believe is a result of a lack of adequate knowledge about the issue.

### 6.2 Conclusion and Limitations

The media has a great effect on forming people’s knowledge and attitudes. However, it is not a mere reflection of the truth. There is an inevitable link between power and the media. Media representations determine power, and the latter is created by building standards, concepts, and principles that form power relationships. Therefore, the media plays a key role in changing the negative portrayal of women. The media should start trying to address the inaccuracies and misrepresentation as well as the humiliating portrayal of women in the media. Research in this field helps to raise public awareness of the importance of accuracy in news reports and to uncover the excising inaccuracies and the ideologies behind them.

To conclude, the findings of this study answers its research questions. First, the results of this research show that the image of Saudi women in the Western media is different from before. The perspective has shifted from the image of the oppressed female who is not allowed to participate in society to the image of the accomplished and successful woman that we have seen in the articles. Second, the examination of

actor representation and quotations shows that there is a significant presence of the Saudi women's voice in the articles published post-lifting the driving ban. Finally, the rescue discourse is less apparent in these articles. The results of this research should not be generalized since the data set that it has analysed is relatively small and since it is difficult to analyse all the overwhelming number of articles that address issues related to Saudi women. Further, due to the space limit, the study does not examine all the linguistic features that could affect the results. For further research, we suggest examining the adjectives that are associated with Saudi women in a corpus, such as the COCA, to have more inclusive results. Another area of great interest is to examine the implications of the Woke culture and movement which is recently seen rapidly spreading in the western media on the understanding of the social differences between eastern and western cultures within the journalism realm.

In recent years, Saudi women have made progress in various fields, becoming more effective in building the Kingdom's society. Observers agree that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has made distinguished strides in various places, in line with its vision for 2030, which aims to reach a set of unique achievements, including shedding light on the achievements of Saudi women. Saudi women have not achieved their aspirations until after a career full of tireless efforts and insistence on excellence and success to highlight their pivotal role, and this has been noted by assuming academic and administrative positions, in addition to various jobs in government and private bodies.

The Saudi woman is part of Saudi society, and she is a mother, a wife, a sister and a daughter. The Saudi woman has been ready for a long time to highlight her role in her society, but perhaps there has been a media weakness or a lack of desire to appear in the media, but the prosperity of the world of "social media" has made the world see closely look at the achievements of Saudi women, as Saudi women may have been working in the shadows and not reaching the spotlight and reducing their successes to their sons and husband, behind every great man is a great woman.

The woman in general is not only a member of her society, but also part of her economic society, as she is an undersecretary of a ministry or an ambassador and occupies several positions, and women in our country have cooperated with the Saudi government to overcome the Corona crisis, and thanks to Allah, we have a rational government that has prepared the infrastructure for us to overcome this crisis, and thanks to this enlightened leadership, we have proceeded quickly to engage in the digital revolution, as government agencies have prepared and the private sector has encouraged to follow suit so that digital transformation would occur in the Kingdom, where the availability of electronic platforms that enable the continuation of the education process in light of the Corona pandemic, is a pioneering effort by our government to Our children maintain the continuity of education under these exceptional health conditions.

Saudi women are more and more eager to aspire to a decent life with good jobs and an excellent economy. Saudi women's dreams have become easy to realize. Today, we are preparing our children for a better tomorrow, whether they are male or female. There is no longer any difference. The horizon of Saudi women has become wider and they can become an astronaut, an engineer, a lawyer, etc.

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